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TAGS: PREL, TU
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF UNDER SECRETARY
APAKAN TO WASHINGTON FOR STRUCTURED DIALOGUE TALKS
Classified By: Ambassador Jim Jeffrey for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) MFA Under Secretary Apakan's December 8-9 visit will be the fifth iteration of the "Shared Vision and Structured Dialogue" agreed upon by Secretary Rice and then-FM Gul in July 2006. Knowing it will take some time for the new administration to have its new team in place, U/S Apakan pressed for these talks to ensure Turkey and the U.S. remain on the same page on a host of issues of mutual importance. Apakan has indicated he hopes to discuss:

- Turkey-Armenia negotiations on normalization of relations
- Caucasus/Russia
- Iraq
- Iran

- Middle East
- Afghanistan-Pakistan relations
- Cyprus/EU accession
- Energy

Armenia
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2. (S/NF) President Gul's visit to Armenia in September for the World Cup qualifier soccer match was a bold step and signaled the GOT's strong interest in normalizing ties with Armenia. Discussions on possible establishment of diplomatic relations, opening the common border, and taking additional steps to normalize relations have become public, though details remain closely held. Thus far, the GOT initiative has been met with general approval in Turkish media. That said, as noted in other channels, the process remains very fragile and we want to continue to encourage it without allowing it to become seen as subject to U.S. "pressure" by either side.

Russia/Caucasus
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3. (S/NF) Russia's August invasion of Georgia has changed the regional dynamic and threatened core Turkish interests in stability in the Caucasus and Turkey's energy supplies (Russia supplies 67 percent of Turkey's natural gas). Although cautious in its response to the Russian invasion, Turkey agreed to all our official requests for support (including the transit of U.S. naval vessels through the Turkish Straits and our request -- later withdrawn) to allow U.S. ISR assets to overfly Turkey en route to the eastern Black Sea). Turkey fears a revived Cold War confrontation with Russia, but recognizes that Russian action against Georgia aims to reassert Russian dominance in the former USSR.

4. (C) At the same time, Turkey blames Saakashvili for provoking the crisis and endangering Turkey's vital interests without prior consultation. Fears about wider instability in the Caucasus, and vulnerability on energy and trade access to Central Asia, have led Ankara to search for political means for defusing the crisis through a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP). President Gul is planning to visit Moscow December 26-28 to discuss CSCP and other aspects of Turkey-Russia relations. We should encourage Turkey to maintain solidarity at NATO to send a clear signal to Russia that it must respect the sovereignty of its neighbors. We should also convey USG interest in continuing our close

consultation on development of the CSCP, which poses various problems from a U.S. point of view.

Iraq/PKK
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5. (S/NF) Our intelligence cooperation against the PKK) which CHOD Basbug publicly described as "perfect" -- is continuing at a high tempo. Real-time intelligence provided by the U.S. to TGS by the Combined Intelligence Fusion Cell (CIF-C) has allowed Turkey to plan over 200 cross-border operations since December 2007, nearly 100 of them since the October 4 PKK attack on a Turkish military outpost that resulted in the deaths of 17 security forces. Analysts are convinced that these operations have changed the way the PKK operates in northern Iraq by denying the PKK its traditional safe haven. More importantly, our cooperation has gained for the USG a new level of visibility into Turkish actions in northern Iraq and has allowed us to shape Turkey's cross-border operations. The intelligence cooperation will require some effort to maintain, especially as we move toward an Agreed Framework with Iraq.

6. (C) Not only has the intelligence sharing relationship

provided us insight on Turkish military actions, but it has helped to unlock new and productive Turkish-Iraq and Turkish-KRG dialogue. President Talabani came to Ankara in March, PM Erdogan visited Baghdad in July (the first by a Turkish PM since 1990) to sign a strategic cooperation agreement with PM Maliki, and GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Ozcelik was given a green light to meet with KRG President Massoud Barzani twice in October, the second meeting taking place in Erbil.

7. (C) Frustration with KRG inactivity against the PKK remains intense, but the nascent dialogue has helped to ease public criticism of Barzani and raised hopes that Iraqi/KRG actions might help further undermine the PKK's base of operations in northern Iraq. Iraqi and Turkish Ministers of Interior met in Baghdad November 19, along with Amb. Crocker and others from MNF-I. They agreed to coordinate intelligence sharing and operational planning to counter the PKK presence in northern Iraq, the details remain under discussion. You should express our support for this engagement and encourage the GOT to build on these gains. It would also be useful to ask about Turkey's broader strategy to end the PKK's decades-long battle with the Turkish state. Senior GOT political and military leaders have admitted that defeating the PKK will require more than military action.

While PM Erdogan has announced some measures to help improve economic conditions in Turkey's Southeast, the political and cultural aspects of a comprehensive strategy are sorely lacking.

8. (C) The Turks' current, Iraq-wide pre-occupations are:

-- rising Iranian influence and what they see as Maliki pandering to it;
-- Iraqi Kurd overreach, especially as concerns Kirkuk (hence the Turks' jockeying last August on the provincial election law);
-- the future of U.S. forces post-SFA/SOFA and after January 20; and
-- getting U.S. support for developing Iraqi gas and exporting it northward to Turkey and European markets beyond.

9. (S) Our use of Incirlik Air Base for Air Cargo Hub operations has been essential to resupply coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. The MOU governing Cargo Hub as well as Habur Gate GLOC and Retrograde operations are set to expire December 31. Work is underway with both the GOT and GOI to put in place the documents the GOT says it needs to extend the agreement, but the extension has not happened yet.

Iran
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10. (C) The Turks are wobbly on Iran. Gul and, to a lesser extent, Babacan and Erdogan, have taken a reasonably firm line since mid-2006 that Turkey does not want a nuclear armed Iran. The Turks have asked Iran to accept the P5 plus 1 proposal, and be constructive on regional issues. However, GOT officials have emphasized the high cost of failure for Turkey if the international diplomatic process with Iran breaks down, with a risk of a nuclear armed Iran or another military conflict on its borders. Ankara has tacked between involvement in the diplomatic process (it offered to be a venue for talks as it was in April 2007) and mediation, which it wants to avoid, despite PM Erdogan offers to act as a "facilitator" between Tehran and the Obama Administration once in office.

11. (C) Turkey has continued a softer line on Iran than is warranted by the facts. Turkey's statement on Iran at the November 27 IAEA Board of Governors meeting was somewhat soft. Turkey allowed Ahmadinejad to visit August 14-15. Talks with Iran on natural gas investment and cooperation continue, though the initiative has not to date brought about a deal. Apakan is firm enough on all these topics and will

seek to reassure you that Turkey only wants to maintain good neighborly relations while keeping its options open on diversifying sources of natural gas. You should review the game plan for the coming months, reiterate the need for Turkey to stay in sync with the P5 1 (particularly as it takes its seat on the UN Security Council in January), and caution the Turks against substantive energy cooperation with Iran.

Middle East
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12. (C) Turkey has hosted four rounds of Syria-Israel talks. They say all sides remain serious, though a fifth round has been postponed because of PM Olmert's resignation. Erdogan

actively worked for the Lebanese presidency compromise in May and has remained engaged to support Siniora, hosting him on a visit to Ankara in early November. Erdogan also remains in regular contact with Damascus. You should encourage Turkey's work in the region and ask that they continue to keep us briefed. They will want to hear your views on what may become of the Annapolis process. Apakan may also seek your counsel on how to move forward with an OSCE type of approach in the Middle East, something he broached with you in September.

Afghanistan/Pakistan
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13. (C) Turkey is hosting a trilateral summit with Afghanistan and Pakistan December 5-6 in Istanbul. The GOT is concerned about the downward slide in Afghanistan, often complains that too little is being done to win hearts and minds there, and has worked steadily to nudge Dostum into retirement. Dostum agreed recently to come to Turkey for "medical treatment" (i.e. an alcohol abuse program) and may remain for awhile.

14. (C) The Turks have commanded ISAF twice and have some 750 troops as well as an Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) there now (with caveats), lead a PRT in Wardak, and have pledged $200m in aid. Turkey supports the proposed expansion of the Afghan National Army (ANA), wants to strengthen the ANA to fight its own war, believes a train and equip model would work in Afghanistan, but has not committed to contributing toward a trust fund to support ANA sustainment. Senior GOT officials have signaled an interest in doing more on training Afghan units, including in Afghanistan, but have not offered specifics. We are urging

GOT military leaders to do more to contribute directly to NATO's efforts during the ongoing High Level Defense Group meetings here in Ankara. Specifically, Turkey can help by providing an additional maneuver battalion, helicopters in the south, additional OMLTs, and reducing caveats limiting the use of its forces.

Cyprus
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15. (C) The Turks continue to give TRNC "President" Talat space to maneuver in negotiating a comprehensive settlement with Christofias. However, most Turks remain skeptical about prospects for striking a deal and convinced that Greek Cypriots have no motivation to conclude a settlement that will allow Turkish Cypriots the level of power-sharing they. GOT officials and Cyprus watchers here believe Nicosia will want to stretch talks out to increase EU pressure on Turkey to open its ports to Cypriots ships and planes in the second half of 2009.

Energy
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16. (C) Turkey's energy policies are driven by insecurity about its future energy supply, particularly of natural gas. We need to encourage Turkey to take decisions now to accelerate the commercial development of the Southern Corridor. First, the world economic crisis and the prospect of a slowing Turkish economy gives Turkey some relief from gas consumption increases that has averaged 15 percent per year. Second, we are working with Ankara to diversify its energy mix away from gas, helping to identify financing for non-gas projects and increased efficiency. Third, Turkey is supporting the EU Commission's concept of a "Caspian Development Corporation" to attract new gas supplies from Turkmenistan westward to Europe. Last, President Gul is working directly with Turkmen President Berdimuhamedov and Azerbaijan President Aliyev to encourage the transit of Turkmen gas across the Caspian Sea and on to Europe.

Political-Military Issues
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17. (C) The following items have come up in Ambassador's initial calls and/or the HLDG and might come up with Apakan:

-- Turkey's request for various intel platforms, attack helicopters, and other facilitation for its cross-border and Southeast counter-terrorist operations;

-- NATO's possible inclusion of the Greek island of Agios Efstratios (Bozbaba in Turkish) in an alliance exercise (Noble Archer), which the Turks argue is demilitarized and thus "disputed."

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